NONPROFITS: FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT

Free Conference With Charity Regulators

03.02.17 | Linda J. Rosenthal, JD

The Federal Trade Commission and the National Association of State Charities Officials have just announced they are holding a free conference later this month that should be of interest to many in the philanthropy community.

> Americans are among the most generous people in the world, contributing more than $373 billion to charity in 2015..., but evolving marketing practices and new technologies have introduced different ways to solicit financial support from charitable consumers.

Participants "will examine issues related to ensuring that consumers are protected from fraud when they make donations and that they have confidence when making donations."

The "Give & Take: Consumers, Contributions, and Charity" conference (March 21 and 22, 2017) will be in Washington, D.C. at the Constitution Center, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, D.C. The first day is free and open to the public; registration is not required. The second day is limited to law enforcement officials only.

For those not able to attend this event in person, it will be webcast live. The sponsors also encourage significant additional input from the stakeholders: regulators, researchers, practitioners, charity watchdogs, donor advocates, and members of the nonprofit sector" as well as law enforcement.

Conference Sponsors and Purpose

The Federal Trade Commission is the nation's consumer protection agency. One of its many areas of focus is protecting consumers from "deceptive for-profit fundraisers and sham nonprofits."
The National Association of State Charities Officials (NASCO) is the association of state regulators with responsibility for oversight of charitable organizations and trusts, as well as charitable solicitations.
These agencies are "deeply involved" in matters of interest and concern to the philanthropy community. The purpose of this event is to "examine how evolving and new solicitation practices on behalf of charitable causes impact individual giving decisions."

Conference Agenda

The conference will bring together the stakeholders most knowledgeable and concerned about ethical charitable solicitation.
"Discussions will focus on consumer protection concerns in the sector, including available data on donor expectations and perceptions, deceptive fundraising practices, the regulatory and enforcement environment, and new charitable giving options."
Although a final agenda for the event will be released soon, as of now, topics will include:

- Current donor choices and challenges
- Empowering donors to avoid fraud through education
- Emerging and future challenges for donors and law enforcement
- Safeguarding donors from fraud

Additional Participation Encouraged

The sponsors invite additional participation before and after the event; namely, "comments from the public," as well as "original research, consumer surveys, and academic papers."
Of particular interest is research related to consumers' expectations regarding their donations, data measuring how often consumers are deceived by charitable solicitations, and recommendations for effective donor education tools or self-regulatory initiatives by charities and fundraisers. Research or data on new fundraising technologies and techniques and their impact on consumer giving is also of interest, as is comment and research from legal scholars on the consumer protection challenges in the evolving fundraising environment.
All submitted papers or comments will be published and publicly available on the FTC's event webpage.
Comments may be submitted online. The public comment period will remain open until May 1, 2017.

Conclusion

Specific additional information is available on the website, including information about accommodations. Email questions to consumergiving@ftc.gov(link sends e-mail).